

Kurzanalyse

März 2010

Disarmament – Non-Proliferation – Deterrence

Heinz Gärtner

Ist „Global Zero“ - die Abschaffung der Nuklearwaffen - möglich?

US Präsident Barack Obama hat sie vor einem Jahr angekündigt.

Was ist in diesem Jahr geschehen?

Kann dieses Ziel überhaupt erreicht werden?

Wie ist nukleare Abrüstung mit nuklearer Abschreckung vereinbar?

Es stehen in diesem Bereich wichtige Entscheidungen unmittelbar bevor:

- ein Abkommen mit Russland,
- die Überprüfung des Atomsperrvertrages,
- die Ratifikation des nuklearen Teststopps durch den US Senat,
- eine neue Nukleardoktrin, und anderes mehr.

Die beigeschlossene Analyse des oiiip versucht, auf diese Fragen erste Antworten zu geben.

Disarmament – Non-Proliferation – Deterrence

Barack Obama spoke of a world free of nuclear weapons in his April 2009 speech in Prague. This paper places his goal of disarmament into the context of the non-proliferation regime, and discusses how non-proliferation and disarmament are linked. Obama also stated that the United States would maintain nuclear deterrence during the disarmament process. Is this feasible? This paper maps out ten suggestions for how this might be accomplished. Some of them could be included in the upcoming Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which should also reflect Obama's Prague speech. But the Nuclear Posture Review should also concentrate on the real threat to international security: nuclear terrorism.

The Non-Proliferation Regime: Obama Changes Course

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) consists of three pillars:

1. Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons: nuclear weapon states should not transfer nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states, and non-nuclear weapon states should not develop or accept them. (Art. I, II)
2. The peaceful use of nuclear energy should not be prevented but supported. (Art. IV)
3. Disarmament: nuclear weapon states commit themselves to negotiate "in good faith" to disarm. (Art. VI)

To sum up: States with nuclear weapons have to move toward disarmament; states without nuclear weapons must forgo them; and all states have an "inalienable right" to peaceful nuclear energy. However, there have always been tensions between states that possess nuclear weapons and those that do not, between the haves and the have-nots.

President George W. Bush practically ignored disarmament (Art. VI) and instead concentrated on counter-proliferation. Although he started some useful counter-proliferation initiatives, they all involve the use of force! For example, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) comprises bilateral agreements on the interdiction of suspicious cargo on high sea, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 prohibits the transfer of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), related materials and delivery systems to non-state actors (who are terrorists).

President Barack Obama changed course. In his speech in Prague in April 2009, he not only spoke of "a world free of nuclear weapons," but also—and even more important—of disarmament of the nuclear weapon states. It was not a general declaration but Obama suggested concrete steps: a follow-up treaty to the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), and a fuel bank to secure vulnerable and loose nuclear material.

In Ankara and Cairo, Obama once again stressed the other two pillars of the non-proliferation regime: the right to peaceful nuclear energy, and he reminded Iran of its non-proliferation commitments.

Obama also scrapped the strategic missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. He suggested moving it closer to Iran to intercept its medium-range missiles. He also hoped to gain Russia's opposition to Iran's nuclear program. What the United States does not admit is that this should make the START follow-up treaty easier to achieve. It was a smart move by Obama to give up a non-working system in exchange for potential Russian concessions. However, for the United States, officially there is no link between missile defense and START, between defensive and offensive systems.

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

How does non-proliferation relate to disarmament? It is more complex than one would think. The simplest link is: fewer nukes, less proliferation. Also, if the nuclear weapon states do not disarm, there is no incentive for emerging nuclear powers to give up their ambitions.

Opponents of disarmament argue that there is no link. In their view, if the U.S. disarms, Iran and North Korea will not follow. However, there have been cases of unilateral nuclear disarmament: South Africa, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Libya. Opponents call these special cases. Yet 189 states signed the NPT, including several that had nuclear weapon programs, like Germany, Sweden, South Korea, and Taiwan.

The strongest link between non-proliferation and disarmament is indirect and long term. It is a change of atmosphere. START, FMCT, CTBT, a fuel bank, and dismantlement of warheads are only pieces in this puzzle.

Disarmament should demonstrate that nuclear weapons do not enhance power, do not bring prestige and higher status, and are not an insurance policy.

Disarmament and Deterrence

In Prague, Obama also said that the United States will retain a deterrent capability as long as nuclear weapons exist. What does nuclear deterrence mean? It is the capability to retaliate if one is attacked or threatened by attack by a nuclear weapon power.

So how, then, does disarmament relate to deterrence? How can a state abolish nuclear weapons yet retain and modernize them at the same time?

Opponents of disarmament, again, argue that it is impossible to have both disarmament and deterrence, that you can't have the cake and eat it too. Deterrence would require specific targeting. Push and pull factors determine nuclear planning. This would not be changed by political decisions.

The upcoming Nuclear Posture Review would have to take into consideration all kind of contingencies. It would have to be capabilities-based like the NPR of George W. Bush and not threat-based, which means not based on a threat analysis but on all kind of contingencies and cases. Targeting in this type of nuclear planning is a driving force for modernization of nuclear weapons. Some say targeting and modernization also require testing; they also oppose ratification of the CTBT. In this scenario, the NPR would not reflect Obama's Prague speech.

How can now disarmament and deterrence go together? Here are ten suggestions:

1. Nuclear weapons should be seen as strictly for retaliation against a nuclear attack. They are not necessary for any offensive or preventive purpose, nor are they useful for defense, except as a deterrent to an intentional nuclear attack. The notion of nuclear weapons as war-fighting weapons that are essentially no different than conventional weapons should be abandoned. Nuclear weapons should be retained only for one second strike. Five hundred strategic nuclear weapons would constitute sufficient deterrence.
2. The U.S. Senate should ratify the CTBT. This would be a barrier to new nuclear warheads, and it would send a strong signal to other Annex II states to do the same.
3. The United States and the Russian Federation should sign and ratify the START follow-up treaty. This would be a good start for the nuclear weapon states to demonstrate their willingness to disarm and meet their commitments in the NPT.
4. Nuclear weapon states should commit themselves to "negative security assurances." This is the guarantee not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.
5. Negative security assurances can be supported by nuclear-weapon-free zones that would create vast areas free of targets for nuclear weapons.
6. For the United States, the next step would be to adopt a policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons. There is strong resistance in the Republican Party and the Pentagon to including "no first use" in the NPR. There are some weaker versions [that could be included instead: a "sole use" of nuclear weapons, which does not exclude a preemptive strike against nuclear installations; or "primary use," which would not change anything because nuclear weapons still could be used against chemical or biological weapons.
7. If the United States is going to follow a policy of deterrence, it cannot rely on strategic missile defense to intercept large numbers of long-range missiles. Strategic missile defense is a driving force for new offensive weapons. There has been a connection between offensive and defensive weapons since the invention of the sword and the shield. There is no deterrence with missile defense. Strategic missile defense always will remain uncertain, so it cannot replace deterrence. This was the logic behind the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty that George W. Bush scrapped in 2002. However, the official U.S. position now is that the

limitation of the number of strategic warheads (START follow-up) is independent of missile defense. If the START follow-up treaty included an explicit link between offensive and defensive weapons, it would jeopardize ratification by the Senate. Russia still has reservations about U.S. missile defense plans in the Middle East and in South East Europe. However, tactical missile defense on an operational level (e.g., Patriot, Aegis, Thaad) should not be a danger for Russia.

8. It would be helpful to rethink and reduce the list of target countries. Bush's classified NPR as well as the current Operations Plan (OPLAN) 8010 of February 2009, which is based on Bush administration guidance, list various hostile target countries, including China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Syria, Cuba (only in the NPR), and an unnamed country that hosts terrorists.
9. For a transition period in the disarmament process, it might be necessary to rely on deterrence by conventional weapons and other non-nuclear options (e. g., damaging telecommunication networks). The United States already is planning the conventional "Prompt Global Strike" system that can reach every corner on the globe. Programs for bunker-breaking nukes should be abandoned. Tailored conventional strikes with smaller amounts of firepower are useful alternatives to Cold War-era strategic nuclear deterrence. Militarily they can be more effective and they drastically reduce unintended casualties.
10. It should be recognized that nuclear weapon states and states that want to achieve this status cannot actually use nuclear weapons. Nukes are useless to fight and win a war. For the United States and Russia, 500 nukes each are enough to inflict unacceptable damage to the other side, but they are not enough to destroy all of the other side's nuclear weapons. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1961 already showed that—even in a brinkmanship crisis—nuclear weapons cannot be used without catastrophic consequences for both sides. There is no historical evidence that nuclear weapons increase the options of regional powers. North Korea would not gain any military advantage. Against whom should it launch a nuclear missile? It already can cause unacceptable damage to Seoul with conventional weapons. Nuclear weapons are important only for internal reasons and to increase the country's status.

If Iran became a nuclear weapon state, it would become a target itself. Nuclear weapons would not enhance Iran's power or regional influence, and it would not give Iran additional options. Neighboring countries might side with the United States or even Israel. Iran would be blamed for any nuclear attack by terrorists.

Nuclear Terrorism

In fact, terrorists are the only ones who would use nuclear weapons. The more nuclear weapons proliferate, the more likely is it that terrorists will get their hands on them. Moreover, non-state actors are also dangerous proliferators (e. g., A. Q. Khan). Both the Nuclear Posture Review and the nuclear

summit in April 2010 should concentrate on nuclear terrorism. This analysis then would be threat-based and not capabilities-based. Securing vulnerable nuclear material and an FMCT—two proposals from Obama's Prague speech—are elements of a disarmament process, of non-proliferation, and they can prevent nuclear terrorism. The danger of a catastrophic nuclear attack should not be exaggerated, however. The dire predictions of many experts after 9/11 did not happen. It turns out to be far more difficult than conventional wisdom suggests for a non-state actor to acquire, assemble, transport and explode a nuclear device, especially without the infrastructure of a modern state.

Conclusion

“Global Zero” will take a long time to be achieved, and it might never be achieved at all. Obama himself said: “maybe not in my lifetime.” What is important, however, is the new attitude toward nuclear weapons. It is increasingly recognized that nuclear weapons confer neither prestige nor status nor security. George Shultz, former U.S. secretary of state and one of the “four horsemen” together with Henry Kissinger, Bill Perry and Sam Nunn who pleaded for a nuclear-free world, said: Nobody believed it when the Declaration of Independence avowed that ‘all men are created equal.’ But look what we have achieved today!

Univ. Prof. Dr. Heinz Gärtner ist Sicherheits- und USA Experte des Österreichischen Instituts für Internationale Politik (oiip) und Autor des Buches „Obama – Weltmacht auf neuen Wegen!“ (lit-Verlag, 2. Auflage, 2009).